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Ministry of Forests and Range

SLIAMMON FIRST NATION TAKES STEP TOWARD FINAL TREATY

POWELL RIVER – The Sliammon First Nation has reached a $2.7-million interim measures agreement with the Province that recognizes its advanced progress toward a final treaty settlement, Forests and Range Minister Rich Coleman announced today.

"Our government is the first in B.C. to share revenue and access to the forests with First Nations, creating more opportunities for First Nations and more certainty and stability for industry," said Coleman. "This agreement will help the Sliammon people become full partners in the forest sector, and share in the benefits of B.C.'s number one industry."

Under the five-year agreement, the Sliammon will have access to 190,000 cubic metres of timber, which includes 140,000 cubic metres for a probationary community forest licence and 50,000 cubic metres as part of a non-replaceable licence. Both are located within the Sunshine Coast Timber Supply Area.

"This agreement represents one of the steps towards reaching an economically viable treaty settlement," said Chief Walter Paul.

The Province is working with the Sliammon to identify an operating area for the pilot community forest. Probationary licences last five years, at which time they may be extended for another five years or replaced with a long-term agreement of 25 to 99 years. Community forest tenures are area-based, giving the holders exclusive stewardship of the land and harvesting rights for the term of the agreement.

"The Sliammon First Nation has taken significant steps in the treaty process," said Tom Christensen, Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation. "We are seeing an unprecedented level of activity as six First Nations in B.C. are negotiating Final Agreements. Today marks a significant day in treaty negotiations with the Sliammon. The interim measures agreement will provide them long lasting forestry and economic benefits and will support their work in negotiating a Final Agreement."

The Sliammon First Nation has 936 members on six reserves near Powell River and along Malaspina Inlet. It is currently in Stage 5, or the final phase, of B.C.'s treaty negotiation process.

The Province has signed six Agreements in Principle since 2003. In addition to the Sliammon, final agreement negotiations are underway with Lheidli T'enneh First Nation in Prince George, the Maa-nulth First Nations on Vancouver Island, the Tsawwassen First Nation in the Lower Mainland, Yekooche First Nation in northwest B.C. and Yale First Nation located on the Fraser River, north of Hope.

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Under the Forestry Revitalization Plan, the Province committed to reallocating timber to communities, woodlot operators and First Nations to create new economic opportunities. To date, the Ministry of Forests and Range has signed forestry agreements with 103 First Nations, providing access to 16.8 million cubic metres of timber and sharing more than $119 million in revenue.

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